# THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELF-EFFICACY FOR CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE ORAL SKILLS AND THE USE OF INDIRECT LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE WITH ORAL SKILLS ACHIEVEMENT OF GRADE 6 STUDENTS IN CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS AT SATIT PRASARNMIT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to determine the level of self-efficacy for learning Chinese as a foreign language oral skill, the use of indirect language learning strategies for learning Chinese as a foreign language oral skills and Chinese oral skills achievement of Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School, and their relationships with each other. Two questionnaires and two sets of listening and speaking tests were used to collect data; one questionnaire was used to determine students' self-efficacy level and the other was used to determine the use of indirect language learning strategies. Listening and speaking tests were applied to determine oral skills achievement of 96 Grade 6 students who studied Chinese as a foreign language in the academic year 2019-2020 at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School. To address the objectives of this research, means, standard deviations, and multiple correlation coefficient analysis were applied. The findings indicated that the Grade 6 students at the target school had a very low level of self-efficacy and a low level of indirect language learning strategies (LLSs) use. It was also revealed that self-efficacy, the use of indirect LLSs and students' oral skills achievement had significant positive relationships with each other.

Recommendations for students, teachers, administrators, and future researchers are provided.

**Keywords:** Self-Efficacy; Language Learning Strategies; Chinese Achievement; Foreign Language Acquisition

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## Introduction

China's international status has been rising rapidly. As communication links between the Chinese people and foreigners increase, more and more people realise the importance of the Chinese language (Kassteen, 2014). However, Jiang (2009) stated that researchers focus more on English and various European languages than on Chinese language in the foreign language acquisition field. Jiang noted that the Chinese language learning should acquire more researchers' attention given the growing number of Chinese language learners globally.

Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy (SE) as a person's judgment of their capacity to achieve a particular goal. He argued that individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy could accomplish more than those with lower levels of self-efficiency. Language learning strategies (LLSs) were defined by Oxford (1990) as explicit practices taken by language learners to help them acquire the target language, make their language learning process progressively effective, and bolster their language accomplishment. Self-efficacy and LLSs are two factors that have drawn many researchers' attention in the foreign language acquisition research field.

From the researcher's experience, Grade 6 students in the class at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School demonstrated a low self-efficacy level and low motivation level in the Chinese language classroom. Students' Chinese language achievement was also at a low level. Therefore, the researcher decided to examine the relationship of Grade 6 students' self-efficacy and their use of indirect language learning strategies with their oral skills achievement in Chinese class at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.

### Research Objectives

1. To determine the level of self-efficacy for learning Chinese as a foreign language oral skills of Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.
   1.1 To determine the level of self-efficacy for learning Chinese as a foreign language listening skills of Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.
   1.2 To determine the level of self-efficacy for learning Chinese as a foreign language speaking skills of Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.
2. To determine the level of indirect language learning strategies, use for learning Chinese as a foreign language of Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.

2.1 To determine the level of metacognitive language learning strategies use of Grade 6 students in Chinese as a foreign language class at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.

2.2 To determine the level of affective language learning strategies use of Grade 6 students in Chinese as a foreign language class at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.

2.3 To determine the level of social language learning strategies, use for learning Chinese as a foreign language of Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.

3. To determine the level of Chinese oral skills achievement for learning Chinese as a foreign language of Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.

3.1 To determine the level of listening skills achievement for learning Chinese as a foreign language of Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.

3.2 To determine the level of speaking skills achievement for learning Chinese as a foreign language of Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.

4. To determine if there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy for learning Chinese as a foreign language oral skills and the use of indirect language learning strategies for learning Chinese as a foreign language with oral skills achievement of Grade 6 students in Chinese as a foreign language class at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand.

**Theoretical Framework**

Two main theories used to guide and support this research were Bandura's social cognitive theory and Oxford's language learning strategy theory.

*Social Cognitive Theory*

Bandura (1989) proposed the social cognitive theory (SCT) including his triadic reciprocal determinism theory. Bandura (1989) stated that triadic reciprocal determinism refers to the relationship among three factors - behaviour, cognition and other personal factors, and environmental factors- which he believes interact with each other, influence each other and determine each other (Bandura, 1989).
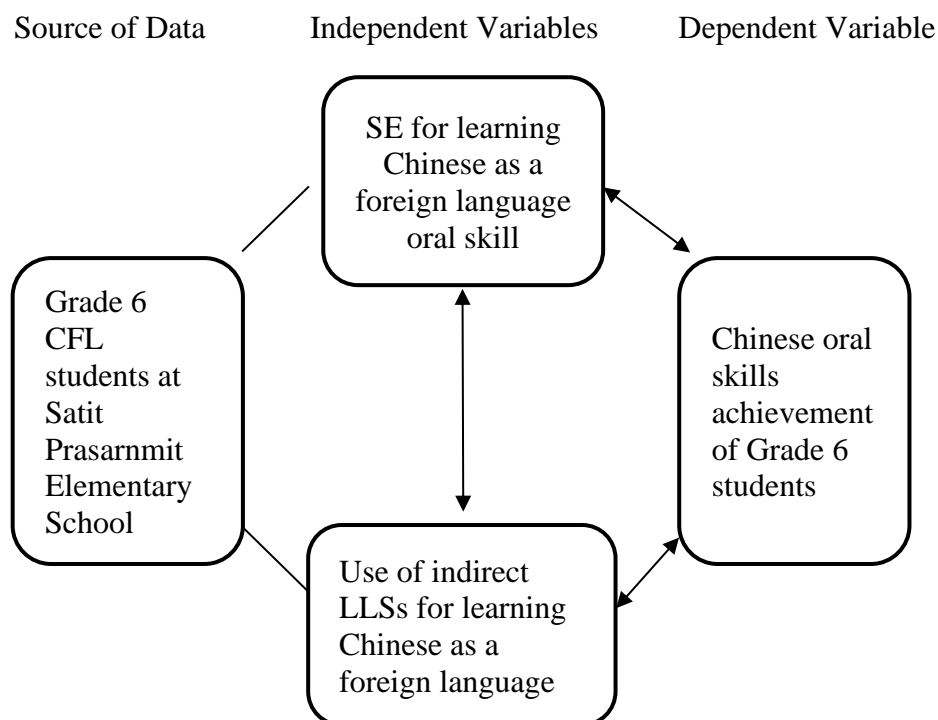
Self-Efficacy Theory. Self-efficacy (SE) is a crucial part of SCT. Bandura defined SE as confidence in one's abilities to take actions required to accomplish specific tasks (Bandura, 1977).

*Language Learning Strategy Theory*
Oxford (2003) defined language learning strategies (LLSs) as specific behaviours or mental processes taken by language learners to boost their L2 learning. Oxford (1990) stated that LLSs help learners to develop their language fluency. Oxford divided LLSs into direct language learning strategies and indirect language learning strategies (Oxford, 1990). In this study, the researcher only focused on the indirect LLSs: metacognitive strategies, social strategies, affective strategies.

**Conceptual Framework**
Figure 1 serves as the conceptual framework of this study. Students' SE level and their use of indirect LLSs serve as the independent variables; students' oral skills achievement serves as the dependent variable.



**Figure 1.** *Conceptual framework.*

**Literature Review**
*Self-Efficacy Theory*
Bandura (1994) stated self-efficacy refers to peoples' self-judgments of their own capabilities to accomplish specific tasks (Bandura, 1994). Bandura (1994) mentioned four sources that affect the development of self-efficacy:

previous study experience; other students' performance; parents, teachers or peers' encouragement; and students' psychological and physiological states.

*Language Learning Strategies Theory*
Oxford (1990) gave the most widely accepted definition of LLSs. She developed her own definition of LLSs as specific actions that are consciously selected by language learners, to improve their acquisition of the target language, their memory and retrieval of language related information (e.g., vocabulary), and their use of the language when they need it.

*Measuring Self-Efficacy*
The Questionnaire of Chinese Self-Efficacy (QCSE) is an adapted version of The Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE) which was developed by Wang, Kim, Bong and Ahn (2013). In this study, the QCSE was used to measure students' SE level for listening and speaking Chinese. The QESE was used in Wang, Wang and Li, (2007) and in Kitikanan and Sasimonton's (2017) study, and it was reported to be both valid and reliable.

*Measuring Indirect Language Learning Strategy Use*
The Strategy Inventory for Chinese Language Learning (SICLL) was adapted from The Strategy Inventory for English Language Learning (SILL). The SILL was developed by Oxford (1990) to examine the LLSs types that language learners apply in their foreign language study. The SICLL was used to measure students' use of indirect LLSs in this study. The SILL has been reported to be both valid and reliable by Oxford and Burry (1995) as well as by Lin (2016) and Mohammadi and Alizadeh (2014).

*Measurement of Students' Oral Skills Achievement*
 The Youth Chinese Test (YCT) was used to assess students' oral skills achievement. The YCT test was launched by the Office of Chinese Language Council International. It is an international standardized test used to examine Non-native Chinese language learners' Mandarin Chinese language proficiency level.

**Methodology/Procedures**
*Population and Sample*
The population for this study was 96 Grade 6 students in Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School in Bangkok, Thailand, during the academic year 2019-2020. Ninety-four students were considered as the sample in this study.

*Research Instruments*

In accordance with the purposes of the study, three instruments were used to achieve the research objectives.

First, The Questionnaire of Chinese Self-Efficacy (QCSE) was utilized to measure students' self-efficacy level. The QCSE English version and the QCSE Thai version are adapted versions of The Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE) produced by Wang, Kim, Bong and Ahn (2013) for the measurement of self-efficacy for foreign language learning.

A summary of the score interpretation for the QCSE listening and speaking subscales and QCSE total score is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Interpretation of the Scores of Chinese Listening Self-Efficacy Subscale, Chinese Speaking Self-Efficacy Subscale, and Chinese as A Foreign Language Oral Skills Self-Efficacy (Total Means)*

| Subscales | Very low | Moderately Low | Slightly low | Slightly high | Moderately high | Very high |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SE for listening | 8.00-16.00 | 16.01-24.00 | 24.01-31.99 | 32.01-40.00 | 40.01-48.00 | 48.01-56.00 |
| SE for speaking | 8.00-16.00 | 16.01-24.00 | 24.01-31.99 | 32.01-40.00 | 40.01-48.00 | 48.01-56.00 |
| Total score | 16.00-32.00 | 32.01-48.00 | 48.01-64.00 | 64.01-80.00 | 80.01-96.00 | 96.01-112.00 |

Second, The Strategy Inventory for Chinese Language Learning (SICLL) was utilized to measure the level of indirect LLSs use. The SICLL English version and the SICLL Thai version are adapted versions of Oxford's Strategy Inventory for English Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990).

A summary of the interpretation of the SICLL for metacognitive, affective and social subscales and the SICLL total score is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Interpretation of the Scores of the Indirect Strategies Results and Subscales (Total mean)*

| Subscales | Very low | Low | High | Very high |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Metacognitive strategies | 9.00-18.00 | 18.01-27.00 | 27.01-36.00 | 36.01-45.00 |
| Affective strategies | 6.00-12.00 | 12.01-18.00 | 18.01-24.00 | 24.01-30.00 |

| Subscales | Very low | Low | High | Very high |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social strategies | 6.00-12.00 | 12.01-18.00 | 18.01-24.00 | 24.01-30.00 |
| Indirect LLSs | 21.00-42.00 | 42.01-63.00 | 63.01-84.00 | 84.01-105.00 |

Third, two sets of the revised Youth Chinese Test (YCT) were used to assess students' oral skills achievement for learning Chinese as a foreign language.

The YCT listening test consists of 20 items. Items 1-5 and items 11-15 require students to make judgments as to whether the pictures match the statement. Items 6-10 and items 16-20 require students to select the picture according to the statement.

The YCT-Speaking Basic test includes three parts: listen and repeat (10 items, items 1-10); listen and answer (5 items, items 11-15); pictures description (5 items, items 16-20).

A summary of the interpretation of the YCT for listening and speaking subscales and YCT total score is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Interpretation of the YCT Oral Test Scores*

| Interpret-ation | Very low | Moderately Low | Slightly Low | Slightly High | Moderately high | Very high |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| YCT oral test | 0.00-10.00 | 10.01-18.00 | 18.01-24.00 | 24.01-28.00 | 28.01-34.00 | 34.01-40.00 |

The quantitative data collected was analyzed by using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and correlational analysis (multiple correlation coefficient) in order to address the research objectives and hypothesis of this study.

**Research Findings**
The findings of the study are presented according to the research objectives.

**Research Objective 1**
Table 4 presents Grade 6 students' mean scores and standard deviations for SE for learning Chinese as a foreign language oral skills and subscales.

Table 4. *Grade 6 students' Means and Standard Deviations of SE for Learning Chinese as A Foreign Language Oral Skills and Subscales (n=94)*

| Self-efficacy subscales | M | SD | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| SE for listening skill | 16.21 | 7.35 | Moderately low |
| SE for speaking skill | 14.47 | 7.85 | Very low |
| SE for oral skills | 30.69 | 14.83 | Very low |

Table 4 shows that Grade 6 students' overall mean score for SE for learning Chinese as a foreign language oral skill was 30.69, which according to the interpretation key (see Table 1) was interpreted as very low.

**Research Objective 2**
Table 5 presents Grade 6 students' mean and standard deviations for the use of indirect LLSs for learning Chinese as a foreign language and subscales.

Table 5. *Grade 6 Students' Means and Standard Deviations of the Use of Indirect Language Learning Strategies for Learning Chinese as A Foreign Language and Subscales (n=94)*

| The use of indirect LLSs subscales | M | SD | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Metacognitive strategy | 19.40 | 6.66 | Low |
| Affective strategy | 13.15 | 4.49 | Low |
| Social strategy | 13.67 | 4.55 | Low |
| The use of indirect language learning strategy | 46.23 | 14.66 | Low |

Table 5 shows that Grade 6 students' overall mean score for the use of indirect LLSs for learning Chinese as a foreign language was 46.23, which according to the interpretation key (see Table 2) was interpreted as low.

**Research Objective 3**
Table 6 shows Grade 6 students' mean scores and standard deviations for oral skills achievement for learning Chinese as a foreign language and subscales.

Table 6. *Grade 6 students' Means and Standard Deviations of Chinese Oral Skills Achievement and subscales (n=94)*

| Chinese oral skills achievement | M | SD | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Listening skills achievement | 7.09 | 4.50 | Moderately low |
| Speaking skills achievement | 8.85 | 3.57 | Moderately low |
| Oral skills achievement | 15.94 | 7.50 | Moderately low |

Table 6 shows that the total mean score of oral skills achievement of Grade 6 students for learning Chinese as a foreign language was 15.94, according to the interpretation key (see Table 3) was interpreted as moderately low.

**Research Objective 4**
Table 7 presents the bivariate correlation results among the three variables, Grade 6 students' level of SE for learning Chinese as a foreign language, their use of indirect LLSs and their Chinese oral skills achievement.

Table 7. *Bivariate Correlations among the Level of SE of Grade 6 Students for Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language, the Use of Indirect LLSs and Chinese Oral Skills Achievement Variables (n=94)*

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.SE level | - | | |
| 2.The use of indirect LLSs | .67* (<.001) | - | |
| 3. Oral skills achievement | .84*(<.001) | .71*(<.001) | - |

Note. * correlation is significant at the level of .05 (2-tailed), p<.001.

As seen in Table 7, there was a significant relationship among students' SE level for learning Chinese and the use of indirect LLSs for learning Chinese with students' Chinese oral skills achievement. It can be seen in Table 7 that the SE level and use of indirect LLSs were strongly and positively correlated (r = .67, p = .00). The SE level and Chinese oral skills achievement were strongly and positively correlated (r = .84, p = .00). The use of LLSs and Chinese oral skills achievement were strongly and positively correlated (r = .71, p = .00).

Table 8 shows the multiple correlation coefficient analysis and model summary statistics for the criterion variable.

Table 8. *Multiple Correlation Coefficient Analysis and Model Summary Statistics for the Criterion Variable (n=94)*

| Predictors | Criterion variable (Chinese oral skills achievement) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $\beta$ | $R$ | $R^2$ | $F$ Value |
| SE level and the use of indirect LLSs | | .86* | .74 | 133.89 |
| SE level | .65* | | .70 | |
| The use of indirect LLSs | .27* | | .50 | |

Note. * correlation is significant at the level of .05 (2-tailed), p<.001.

According to Table 8, the findings of the multiple correlation coefficient analysis indicated that there was a strong positive significant relationship between the predictor variables and the criterion variable (R=.86, p<.01). It was noted that the combined predictors, namely self-efficacy for learning Chinese and the use of indirect language learning strategies for learning Chinese accounted for 74% of the variance in Grade 6 students' Chinese oral skills achievement ($R^2$=.74, F=133.89, p<.01).

## Discussion

### Self-Efficacy and Chinese Oral Skills Achievement

The findings showed that the Grade 6 students' overall level of SE for learning Chinese as a foreign language oral skill was low at the target school. The students lack experience in Chinese language learning, therefore, may explain the low level of SE. As well, according to the researcher's observation, the teachers did not provide effective feedback to students frequently, and students sometimes did not understand teachers' expectations. It has been discussed in many studies that SE positively affects students' learning achievement (e.g., Li, 2016; Ooyoung, 2013). As an echo of previous research, in this study, the findings indicated that self-efficacy and Chinese oral skills achievement were significantly correlated. This can be attributed to the positive attitude that learners have toward their learning tasks, as concluded by Ooyoung (2013) in her study with a group of 96 students who studied Chinese as a foreign language. She found that self-efficacy boosted students' positive attitude on learning tasks. The same finding was found in Li's (2016) study which examined self-efficacy level among international students who were studying Chinese in Liaoning university, China. It was found that when students' self-efficacy level increased, they achieved better in the Chinese language course.

### The Use of Indirect Language Learning Strategies with Chinese Oral Skills Achievement

The findings indicated that Grade 6 students' overall indirect strategies use for learning Chinese as a foreign language was low at the target school. According to Oxford (2016), Beginning level learners would utilize less LLSs since they lack foundational knowledge of the Chinese language, this could explain why students lack of utilize LLSs, most of them are at beginning level in mandarin class, it was also hard for the Grade 6 students to consciously control their emotions, motivations, and attitudes to learn Chinese. The researcher also observed that the teachers did not provide sufficient LLSs knowledge and tutoring for the students.

The findings revealed that the use of indirect language learning strategies and Chinese oral skills achievement were significantly correlated. This finding is consistent with other studies, such as Jiang (2000) who investigated LLSs used by a group of language learners at a university in Beijing and found that the use of LLSs significantly correlated with Chinese language achievement. Similar to Jiang, Wang (2017) also indicated in his study, which investigated 88 Korean Chinese language students at a South Korean university, that the use of LLSs was significantly correlated with students' HSK scores. The choice of LLSs is determined by many factors. According to Oxford and Nyikos (1989). (1989), the choice of LLSs is related to language that learners have learned, their language proficiency level in the target language, their level of metacognitive awareness, their gender, their aptitude as well as several other factors. Wang (2017) also reported that higher scoring learners used LLSs more actively and frequently.

*The Relationship between Self-Efficacy and the Use of Indirect Language Learning Strategies with Chinese Oral Skills Achievement*
The findings showed that the oral skills achievement of Grade 6 students for learning Chinese as a foreign language was moderately low at the target school. Because of the limited learning schedule, students did not have enough time to learn and practice their Chinese language, so their Chinese proficiency remained at a low level.

The findings also showed that there was a significant relationship between Grade 6 students' self-efficacy level and their indirect language learning strategies use with their Chinese oral skills achievement at the target school. The correlation coefficient analysis indicated that there were strong positive significant relationships among the combined predictors and criterion variable. This finding is in line with those of prior investigations (Li, 2016; Wang, 2017). With the significant positive correlations found in this research, it is safe to say that for this group of learners, the level of SE and the use of indirect LLSs were both found to be linked to Chinese oral skills achievement. Learners with higher levels of SE and who make effective use of indirect LLSs achieve better in Chinese language oral skills learning. A similar finding was presented by Wang (2017) in his study. He found that the use of LLSs was significantly related to students' Chinese language achievement. He believed that social strategies played an essential role in the improvement of Chinese proficiency. Zhang (2014) found that the choice of LLSs, as well as the frequency of utilization of LLSs, were significantly different among Thai students in her study which investigated Chinese LLSs used by Chinese students at a high School in Thailand. She believed these differences led to students' different Chinese language proficiency levels. In terms of self-

efficacy, Li (2016) found that the self-efficacy of the higher scoring group among her subjects was significantly higher than the lower scoring group. Li (2016) stated that a higher level of SE and successful learning experiences enhanced students' confidence in learning and also activated their desire to learn Chinese well, improving their self-expectations in their own learning success. She also highly empathized the importance of building up students' confidence at the beginning of language learning.

## Recommendations

According to the findings of this study, the researcher would like to present the following recommendations to students, teachers, administrators and future researchers.

### *Recommendations for Students*

The findings of this study indicated that SE and the use of LLSs were significantly correlated with Chinese oral skills achievement. The Grade 6 students are recommended to considering the following suggestions:

First, with the guidance of the teachers, students should try to get the awareness of the importance of their self-efficacy for learning and their effective use of LLSs at the earliest stages of Chinese language learning. For example, students can use the LLSs inventory to examine themselves, find out which strategies they are using now, and make a list of strategies that they have not tried, and try them out in future learning. They can share with their classmates which strategies they prefer, and what has worked well for them when they study Chinese. They should exchange ideas with their classmates on an on-going basis – this is the foundation of collaborative learning, which can be applied to all subjects, not just language learning.

Second, students should ask for their Chinese teachers to guide them in applying and practicing LLSs in the Chinese language class. Given that most students lack experience in implementing LLSs, support from teachers will be helpful for students to study more efficiently.

Third, students should choose appropriate LLSs to enhance their Chinese language learning based on their background, such as language proficiency level, interests, culture, and always make adjustments to fit their current learning situation.

Fourth, students should organize their own learning, try to spend more time on their Chinese language learning, and so gradually, make progress in improving their language proficiency.

*Recommendations for Teachers*

Teachers should work as coaches and facilitators in the class, establishing circumstances that enhance students learning. They should develop learning activities for students to practice Chinese in realistic, relevant real-world contexts. Teachers are suggested to do the following:

First, Chinese language teachers in the target school should provide clear and specific feedback for individual students or groups.

Second, Chinese language teachers in the target school should design standard assessment rubrics. It is recommended that the teachers should not use test scores as the only criteria for a students' evaluation. Teachers should try to support their students' learning by enhancing their confidence in the class, encouraging them to join classroom activities and supporting students' interests in Chinese language class.

Third, Chinese language teachers in the target school should provide materials and tutorials for the improvement of SE and the use of LLSs for students. For example, techniques to apply LLSs, or offer after school tutorials for students who have difficulties with self-efficacy or LLSs.

Fourth, in order to help individual students to learn more effectively, Chinese language teachers should organize the class based on students' levels and capabilities by applying differentiated instruction in the classroom.

*Recommendations for Administrators*

Administrators should support teachers to create a learning environment that enhances students' SE and their use of LLSs as part of their learning. For example, the school should support teachers to evaluate students through multiple assessment types and provide teachers and students multimedia equipment to practice the Chinese language.

Administrators should work with teachers to prepare standard grade-level syllabi to guide teachers and students in their learning. Syllabi provide critical guidance for teachers and students in the learning process.

Administrators should arrange in-service teacher professional development sessions.

Administrators should make arrangements for the school schedule, ensure enough learning hours are provided for Chinese language learning, and extra

activities are offered to students to do more practice in using Chinese language.

*Recommendations for Future Researchers*
This study was conducted with Grade 6 students at Satit Prasarnmit Elementary School. The researcher found that the whole data collection process was hard to manage as it took a very long time to distribute and collect all questionnaires and tests; also, the students were too young to be aware of the strategies they used and self-graded themselves on each item. Thus, it is recommended that it would be better if researchers could use these two sets of questionnaires with elder. Or, if working with younger students, develop instruments more suited to less cognitively developed language learners.

It is suggested that future researchers could explore other factors that influence students' SE and use of LLSs in the classroom. Examples of such factors might be self-efficacy sources beyond the school, such as parents, older siblings, non-school learning experiences, as well as other possible influences.

Larger sample sizes with a combined correlation-comparative research design is also recommended for future researchers, to make the research more valid and reliable. This will also help researchers get a better view and more useful in-depth findings toward understanding SE and the use of LLSs and Chinese language achievement in Chinese language classes.

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